

YOUR WEEK IN CHINA'S CAPITAL

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Tencent, NetEase, Sohu Abandon Their Weibo

For Sina Weibo, victory in the Weibo wars of 2010-2014 may prove to be Pyrrhic. **Page 4**



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Students to Save Soccer

To raise a generation of stronger soccer players and save the failing national team, the Ministry of Education is pushing 20,000 students across the country into league soccer. **Page 2**

Shenyang Students Carry Recorders to Catch Abusive Teachers

BY LI RUIQI

Teachers have been on their guard since the firing of a colleague who was secretly recorded while heaping verbal abuse on a student named Xiao Dou last week in Shenyang, Liaoning province.

An anonymous parent turned over more than 29 audio clips of the verbal abuse, which Liaoning TV aired during a news broadcast on November 18.

The teacher, surnamed Sun, worked at Beiyiqi Elementary School in the city's Shenhe district. Since the story broke, students throughout Shenyang have been buying and carrying voice recorders to class. Many are designed

to resemble pencil sharpeners, watches and hairpins.

"Parents and grandparents have become big customers [for my recorders] since that report," said a vendor named Xiaoliang.

But teachers say the records represent a disheartening lack of trust.

"I felt hurt when I saw one grandma tuck a recorder into her grandchild's pencil box," said a teacher at Huanggutun Elementary School who refused to be named.

The legality of such secret recordings is under a heated discussion.

"I think parents made too much fuss about it. Monitoring in this fashion could be considered to be discrimination against

teachers," said a netizen named Zhang Xueyun. But another commentator, Liu Wei, said he supported the students' behavior and that monitoring would improve the quality of instruction.

Li Jia, a lawyer from Beijing Yingke Law Office, said parents have the right to audit the class, either by being physically present or by using a recorder. Those who catch any abuse can file a complaint as Xiao Dou's father did.

"But parents have to be careful not to infringe on the teacher's reputation by distorting or exaggerating the truth," Li said.

Li said the students' behavior would only violate the teacher's right to privacy if it were uploaded to the Internet without permission. ■

LONGING



Comics by Tango (©tango2010)





Compulsory Soccer the Key to Saving the National Team?

BY LI RUIQI

The Ministry of Education is throwing its support behind the cause of saving Chinese soccer with a new plan to push 20,000 primary and middle school students into the sport by 2017.

Next year, the National Cultivation Plan of Sports Teachers will hire another 6,000 campus soccer coaches to meet the growing need.

In order to save Chinese soccer, the Ministry of Education assumed control of campus soccer from the Administration of Sports, which has been rocked by scandals in recent years.

"Soccer will become a compulsory course in many schools and included in physical fitness evaluations," said Yuan

Guiren, minister of education.

However, the plan has been challenged by such obstacles as budget and venue.

On average, China's elementary and middle schools have 3,000 to 4,000 students but only one soccer field. Even if the Ministry of Education can subsidize venue expansion, most schools will not have the necessary land. The budget may also be unfeasible.

In Chongqing, the government allocated 1 million yuan to subsidize campus soccer. By the time it was distributed, each school received only several thousand yuan.

"That was all the money we had to buy sports equipment and train our coaches," said Ma Yuchang, a spokesman for the Chongqing Football Association. "Coaches resigned one after another. The low pay left them disinterested in doing their jobs."

Although compulsory soccer will enlarge the number of people playing in China, many doubt whether such low-level team sports will be a realistic training pool for the national team. Few campus coaches have professional qualifications, and students are unlikely to be competitive enough to enroll in a professional teams or amateur clubs after graduation.

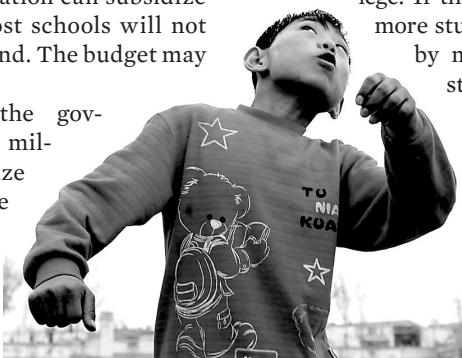
"We need to establish some soccer clubs and lower professional leagues through which we can pick out the most promising young players," said Wang Tao, a campus coach in Beijing.

Parents worry the new focus on soccer could become another tool that spoils academic fairness.

Last year, a high school in Benxi, Liaoning province was exposed for sending an inordinate number of "state-level athletes" to take the National College Entrance Exam. Similarly, many parents are afraid of being charged to secure a position for their child on the first team, which would add 5 to 10 points to the student's exam score.

"I would definitely bribe the coach if other parents did. As parents we have no other alternative," said Huang, the mother of a 12-year-old son.

"Personally I think soccer skills shouldn't be a stepping stone to a good college. If the government wants more students to play soccer by making it a stepping stone, then it needs to do something to make sure the sport isn't turned into a mechanism for corruption," a netizen named Sange said on Sina Weibo. ■



Street Artist's Foot Paintings Stun the Public

BY DIAO DIAO

The amazing art of Li Weichao has captured the public's imagination. The 39-year-old disabled man works each day in the Dongzhimen Subway Station tunnel to create Chinese paintings with his feet.

Born in Fuyang, Anhui province, Li never had the chance to go to school after a severe fever at the age of six caused him to develop spinocerebellar ataxia. With few other alternatives, Li devoted himself to drawing and learned to create traditional paintings with his feet.

In an interview with Qianlong.com, Li said he has been living in Beijing for nine years. He lives in Shunyi district and has been supporting himself with his art for the last eight years.

"I leave home at 7 am every morning from Shunyi district and head back at 6 pm," Li said. "I can live like a normal person. My feet can press numbers and text on my phone, and I can use them to eat, drink and draw."

Li said he earns about 100 to 200 yuan per day – more when people decide to buy his paintings.

Li captures the attention of many people passing through the subway station. Many said if they hadn't seen him painting, they would have thought the pictures were the work of college students studying fine art.

Most of the time Li imitates other famous artists' pictures. "Most pictures take seven or eight days to complete, so the price is a bit high, about 500 yuan," he said. "I want to paint even more and earn enough money to open a small exhibition."

Li also plans to donate some of his pictures to charity organizations. ■



CFP Photos

Weibo Scrubs Records to Remove WeChat Ads

BY DIAO DIAO

With users leaving Sina Weibo in droves as the famous microblog platform grows thick with ads, the company has found a way it hopes to retain its lead.

Last week, Sina announced its plan to force out all the public accounts that are spamming WeChat QR code links or face deletion.

The plan aims to stamp out the many spam accounts used to reply to random posts and send out mass promotional messages.

Sina Weibo said many of the QR codes being shared are for shops with fake or pornographic products. Wang Gaofei, the CEO of Sina Weibo, said they would put special effort into dealing with e-commerce accounts.

"Early in November, we forced out everyone posting direct links. Now the advertisers have switched to QR codes," Wang said. "Many users have complained. We have to clean it up to improve the user experience."

The plan's main targets are public accounts sharing unsolicited links to WeChat, Yixin and Taobao.

Tencent has come out in support of the plan. "We feel pleased that Sina Weibo is dedicated to cleaning up its social platform. The user experience is fundamental," a spokesperson for Tencent said. "WeChat has been clearing up its own malicious marketing, and we will continue to work on it."

The attitude of Tencent seems odd to many users.

Sina Weibo has been losing its market as WeChat takes over. After the loss in attention, Weibo has started to fight back.

Early in April, before Sina went to the US for its IPO, the company struggled to suppress WeChat by forcing out public accounts that promoted the alternative platform.

Similarly, the war between Didi Dache and Kuaidi Dache revealed the tension between Alibaba and Tencent.

Though the number of closed accounts has not been released by Sina Weibo, the company said personal accounts still can share links between Weibo and WeChat. ■



Hangzhou Library Opens its Doors to the Homeless

BY DIAO DIAO



CFP Photos

Most Chinese libraries have only three types of patrons: students, blue-collar workers and gamers. But Hangzhou's library is trying to welcome the city's homeless.

Hangzhou residents have reported many homeless people lining up outside the library each morning with their heavy cloth bags. Liang Liang, the vice curator, said come early so they can start reading as soon as the library opens.

"Homeless patrons enjoy the same free access to TV, films, Internet, music and hot water," she said. "They will remain equally accessible for as long as we can provide service."

Liang said 90 percent of the library's area is open to readers, making it the largest public library with the most open area in the country.

Hangzhou is also unusual in that it allows homeless readers to take their bags into the library. Liang said he was surprised to hear that this is uncommon. "As a member of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, we think that it's our duty to provide service to readers regardless of their race, age or status," Liang said. "No one can refuse another's pursuit of knowledge."

Liang said the library has never turned away a homeless person during her 28 years with the building.

But many readers complain about the smell of homeless people who sit too close. Chu Shuqing, curator of the Hangzhou Library, said that the library has no right to force anyone to leave. "Readers can change their seats. Besides, the homeless people aren't disturbing anyone," he said.

But recently the library has noticed that more homeless people and trash scavengers are storing their bags outside and washing their hands before reading.

Zhang Kai is one of them.

Zhang is a retiree who lives on his pension and whatever he can scavenge from the trash in Hangzhou. He washes his hands before choosing what he reads. "The library didn't ask people to wash, but I think I should show respect to both the library and the books," he said.

Librarian Zhang Haiqing said Zhang Kai doesn't just visit for fun: he always stops on to the third floor to read newspapers and books about politics. Zhang Kai said that he is old but wants to keep up with what's going on in the world.

Hangzhou's library is now planning to provide more service to readers such as glasses for the old and delivery service for the disabled. Many libraries in Guangzhou, Nanjing and Chengdu have also opened to the homeless. ■



Obedient Robber Arrested in Guangdong

Readers take heed: it takes more than a kitchen knife if you are hoping to scare your local bank teller into opening the vault.

A man armed only with a kitchen knife stormed into a bank in Heyuan, Guangdong province at 9 am last Thursday and announced he was robbing the bank. The calm teller told him he would have to wait in line.

Amazingly, he did. When it was his turn, the teller informed him she would not be able to complete his withdrawal of 10,000 because his account had only 1 yuan left. Police arrived and arrested the man shortly after.

(Ntdtv)

Beijing Shop Bans Chinese Customers

One has to question the wisdom of banning the majority of the country's people from your store, but that's precisely what a shop on Yabao Road has done.

Its sign, which reads "Chinese not admitted," was posted after a security camera caught a Chinese while in the act of stealing a foreign customer's wallet. One of the store employees also complained about how Chinese female customers try on lots of clothes but never buy anything.

Clearly the only solution is to indiscriminately ban Chinese customers. The shop said it had no choice but to post the notice as "Chinese customers are too annoying."

(Beijing Youth Daily)

Female Cadre's Words Fell Security Guard

A cadre with the Department of Education in Anhui province allegedly killed a security guard with her words on November 11.

The woman was attempting to back her car into the Xiangzhang Yayuan residential area when the security guard Zhao Zhongwei stopped her. After arguing over who was going to heaven and who was going to hell, the woman shouted, "You're just a watch dog!"

Zhao became extremely angry. Three minutes later, after the woman had left, Zhao returned to his booth. Within 10 seconds he turned pale and collapsed. He was rushed to a hospital but pronounced dead on arrival.

The woman agreed to pay an undisclosed compensation to Zhao's surviving family members.

(iFeng)

Shenzhen Nabs Nation's Worst Driver

If there is a world record for most automotive accidents, a man surnamed Lai in Guangdong may be in the running.

In the year since he got his driver's license, Lai has caused and fled from more than 120 traffic accidents. Liu Yi, one of Lai's victims, said Lai and his friends jumped out of the car and started cursing at him and threatening physical harm when Lai crashed into his car in June.

The men threatened to call on their triad contacts if Liu attempts to get the police involved in their dispute.

(Sohu)

Subway Passengers Organize to Evade Price Hikes

BY YANG XIN

Beijingers will soon have to bid farewell to the era of extra-affordable public transportation. On November 25, the municipal government announced its proposed price hikes would take effect on December 28.

The Beijing Municipal Commission of Development and Reform said subway fares would increase from 2 yuan to 3 yuan for the first 6 kilometers. For trips that exceed the 6-kilometer limit, fares would be charged according to the distance with no limit.

For bus passengers, a ride of 10 kilometers would be charged 2 yuan: buses will cost 1 yuan for each additional 5 kilometers. Card users can enjoy a 50 percent dis-



count, which is 10 percent less than the 60 percent discount currently offered.

After adjustments, the average price of subway transport is expected to be about 4.3 yuan and bus transport 1.3 yuan. These rates would cover about 50 percent and 38 percent of their real costs respectively, said an official at the Beijing Municipal Development and Reform Commission.

But residents are determined to fight the change.

Many commuters have taken to the Internet to find others who share their route in the opposite direction. There are already QQ, Weibo, Momo and Baidu groups dedicated to helping users find a fellow passenger with whom they can

swap cards.

By switching cards, it would make departure and arrival stations appear close enough to be billed at the 3 yuan rate.

There is even talk of creating a mobile app to speed up the exchange process.

A spokesperson for the Traffic Committee of Beijing stated the subway would put forward measures to stop card swappers, but only if the phenomenon really takes off.

Up to now, the only measure to prevent card swapping is increased staff. On December 2, the Traffic Committee said that 3,600 new staff members would be hired to perform supervision and emergency work in the subway stations.

"Shanghai people have been using the ticket exchange for a long time. Why can't we? We are just exploiting the advantage," said one Internet commentator.

Legal professionals were not optimistic. "Exchanging subway tickets midway is the same as trying to ride for free. If anyone actually develops an app to facilitate the swap, they could be considered an accessory to the crime," said Cheng Zhi, a lawyer at Beijing Guohan Law Firm. ■



The Day the Weibo Died

BY LYNNE WANG

The end is nigh for many of China's microblogging platforms. NetEase announced the shutdown of its microblog and urged users to move to LOFTER, a new Tumblr-like service, on November 5. Although NetEase promised to migrate users' posts and friends over to its new platform, the closure could break thousands of digital relationships since LOFTER's acceptance remains uncertain.

Tencent Weibo followed suit the next day by suspending new Weibo account applications and renewals. A company spokesman said Tencent is "adjusting" its microblogging strategy. In fact, the adjustment began in July when Tencent closed its Weibo business unit and stopped updating related products.

Although Sohu Weibo has yet to make an announcement, rumors among IT circles say the majority of its operations staff has resigned or been transferred.

It appears the four-way competition that began in 2010 has ended with Sina's triumph.

"For Tencent, NetEase and Sohu, the failure of their microblogging business was inevitable. They never seized on the trend early enough to develop and strengthen themselves. Worse yet, they followed without innovating," said by Xue Song, a reporter for the *Guangzhou Daily*.

From Rise to Fall

When Twitter appeared in 2006, many IT firms jumped on the microblog bandwagon. Among the first Chinese imitators were Fanfou, Digu and Jiwai, which came online in 2007. But the microblogging market didn't boom until the

four largest portals – Sina, Sohu, Tencent and NetEase – entered the battle two years later.

Sina was the first to enter the industry with Sina Weibo in August 2009. With the market already primed by earlier efforts, Sina quickly emerged as a leading force in the domestic microblog scene. By 2010, Sina Weibo had 50 million registered users. It surged ahead to 100 million the following year.

NetEase and Sohu released their microblogging products in January 2010 prior to Tencent, which joined the battle that March. While Tencent endeavored to guide its existing users of QQ and Qzone to the new Weibo platforms, Sohu CEO Charles Zhang ordered investment in Sohu Weibo to have "no limit."

However, none of the three ever managed to make their user base exert any social influence. In March 2014, Sina Weibo changed its name to Weibo. A month later, it went public on the US Nasdaq market.

Celebrity effect and news influence are two reasons why Sina Weibo succeeded and survived, according to business analysts.

"In the blog era, Sina was famous for 'celebrity blogs' run by opinion leaders such as Han Han, [a famous writer], and Xu Jinglei, [an actress and director], which lured in many other users," said by Ma Liying, a journalist at *Northern Media Research*. "The same policy was applied to develop Sina Weibo: celebrities from many fields were invited to set up microblogging accounts and interact with their followers."

The nature of Sina Weibo made it an essential tool for people to explore

information and express ideas, said Xin Yuanwei, a reporter for *21st Century Business Herald*. "Similar to Twitter, Sina Weibo not only gathers information from numerous news agencies and media organizations but also offers users a platform to speak or become a source of news."

But compared to what other players have done, the root of Weibo's survival is Sina's focus on microblogging as its lifesaving straw, *The Paper.cn* said in an editorial. "Weibo is the core business of Sina. What Sohu, Tencent and NetEase were missing was timing, strategy and most importantly, strength of devotion."

But even with the departure of its rivals, Weibo is not exactly relieved.

The number of active microbloggers has collapsed over the past two years. More than 370 million Chinese were microblogging in 2012. That number fell to 275 million this June, according to statistics from CNNIC.

Although Sina Weibo has not acknowledged the decrease in active users, third party research has found that Weibo is shrinking. Fast.

Earlier this year, East China Normal University released a study that found Sina Weibo's most active users have decreased the frequency of their posts.

While there were 430,000 people posting in March 2012, the figure decreased to 114,000 in December 2013: more than 73 percent of the active users became reluctant to use Weibo. The amount of posts by active users also dropped at a rate of 70 percent.

Evolutionary Dead End

"What Sina Weibo has to admit to itself is that Chinese netizens are going

silent on microblogs. They are preparing to escape," GlobalWebIndex said in a report.

This is true, especially with the emergence of new mobile social media tools like WeChat, MoMo and Credulity, all of which have gained traction since 2012 and continue to grow as Weibo tumbles.

According to statistics from CNNIC, approximately 564 million of Chinese people were using such mobile apps with a year-on-year rise of 32.08 million: 89.3 percent of netizens had adopted at least one mobile messaging app.

Indeed, insiders have a gloomy outlook on Sina's continued development.

"Compared to Weibo, which emphasizes the integration and distribution of public information, WeChat focuses on the maintenance and management of users' social connections," said by Hu Qianwei, an independent business observer.

"But the root value of WeChat is to manipulate users' entire lives. WeChat threatens to take Weibo's users, as well as their social connections and derived profitable models," Hu said.

If the boom of mobile instant messaging apps is the external crisis for Weibo, internal problems further explain its downward spiral.

"The primary problem for Weibo is its business model, which depends too much on advertisements and lacks ability to benefit from other channels," said by Yu De, an IT analyst. "As a result, advertisements and marketing information have flooded Weibo, which damages the user experience."

Earlier last year, Weibo had a partnership with Alibaba and the Chinese e-commerce giant became the second largest shareholder of Sina Weibo. "Although Alibaba spent \$380 million to put its ads on Weibo, Sina puts its platform at risk by relying on Alibaba's money," Yu said.

The celebrity effect and media gene that made Weibo such a success in previous years has ironically become its greatest problem.

"Instead of mining the genuine demands of normal users, Weibo's strategy revolved around wooing more celebrities and opinion leaders, or so-called VIP users, to expand their influence," said He Chuan, a journalist from Huxiu.com. "But with the unbalanced environment, this minority has gradually controlled the source of news and the right to be heard. Normal users are now spectators with no ability to share or participate."

If Weibo played a significant role in spreading emerging news as a supplement to traditional media in earlier years, today that media gene has been bred out. "The flood of fake information and rumors has decreased people's trust in Weibo news. As a result, the media features have degraded to an information playground flooded with anecdotes, enterprise announcements and all types of useless information," He said.

The magic of the Internet is its spirit of flatness and decentralization in terms of social connections, said Yochai Benkler, a digital media researcher. But it seems that the current development of Weibo swims against this trend by ignoring the demands of normal users.

While it is alive for the moment, Weibo is drifting ever farther from being a relevant part of daily life, the *Beijing Morning Post* said in an editorial. ■



Photo by CFP

Higher Education Takes a Lesson from Golden Era

BY YANG XIN

As 2014 draws to a close, the independent recruitment policies for most Chinese universities are still up in the air.

On December 2, rumors surfaced that Peking University and Tsinghua University had submitted their 2015 independent recruitment projects to the Ministry of Education for approval. However, both universities' admission offices denied the report.

In a guideline document released by the Ministry of Education in September, students applying for universities' independent recruitment exams still had to take part in the National College Entrance Exam. Moreover, universities would be prohibited from using joint recruitment exams. "The scale of independent recruitments should be well controlled," the guideline said.

It seems confusing, however, after the government's years of efforts in promoting autonomous admission among universities.

Independent recruitment examinations began at 20 Chinese universities as a pilot program in 2003. Selected schools were allowed to admit 5 percent of the student body using their own criteria. Today, that program has expanded to 80 universities across the country.

In 2011, seven universities including Shanghai Jiaotong University and Renmin University of China formed a recruitment league and jointly prepared an independent exam for students looking to avoid



Yenching University in the Republican Era
Photo by Sing Pao

the National College Entrance Exam.

Huang Zhen, vice president of Shanghai Jiaotong University, said the joint entrance exam was a way universities could seize more power to select their students.

The quest for autonomy is not limited to the admissions system. After being held down by the Ministry of Education for several decades, many schools are looking to the past for ideas about how to improve in the future.

Education in the Past

To some extent, the appeal for more education independence is driven by a renewed interest in early modern China.

During the Republican Era (1911-1948), Peking University and Tsinghua University grew to become some of the world's finest schools in less than a decade. The

two produced a number of distinguished scholars, such as Hua Luogeng, Chen Xingshen, Feng Youlan and Chen Yinke.

In the 1920s, campuses were abuzz with discussion of education independence. "It was something about which people cared deeply at that time," said Xie Yong, a professor at Xiamen University.

One apparent advantage was the high salary and profound background of professors and school governors, which granted them sufficient power to promote whatever educational concepts they wished.

Cai Yuanpei, a former president of Peking University, was a firm supporter of education independence. As a senior statesman of the Tongmenghui, China's leading revolutionary group at that time, Cai had power to put his ideas into practice in Beijing. He strived to bypass partisanship and make the academy a pure land.

"For the most part, universities in the past were like independent persons, each of whom had distinct characteristics," said Chen Yuan, a commentator on Sohu. "This is mostly because of the absolute power of presidents which granted universities total autonomy in school operation."

"The cause of education should be managed by educators," Cai said. "I would never accept the president title at a university that did not enjoy education freedom."

Along with Cai, Mei Yiqi, president of Tsinghua, Zhang Boling, president of

Nankai University and John Leighton Stuart, president of Yanjing University, were all advocates of education independence.

It was an easier position back then, as the era enjoyed a comparative lack of government interference.

"It is hardly possible to separate education from the national orthodoxy of China. The short-lived education independence promoted by Cai Yuanpei and his contemporaries was a historical anomaly caused by a vacuum of central governing power – another consequence of battling warlords," Ifeng said in an editorial.

While harsh, Ifeng's commentary is not entirely inaccurate.

Cai's reforms lasted only two years before being shut down by the national government in 1929. Yet the progress the schools made in those two years lends strength to the argument that education independence is a must.

A boom in private universities during the Republican Era has also fascinated contemporary educators.

"The golden age of Chinese private universities was 1912 to 1932. They exceeded public universities in both number and variety," said Yuan Zheng, a professor at the Education Science School of South China Normal University.

Yuan said the most significant advantage of private universities is that they enjoy more freedom. Prestigious public universities of today, such as Fudan University and Nankai University, were actually privately owned during their glory days.

The scholar Hu Shi once spoke about higher education: "I remember there were more than a hundred private universities before the War Against Japanese Aggression. And everyone from professor to student was indulged in pure academic study. Private universities were promising and worthy of investment."

A Permanent Appeal

At the 2014 Education Forum for Asia Annual Conference in November, Li Yanbao, a member of the National Commission on Education Consulting, made exactly the same appeal as Hu Shi.

"Independent academies have become an indispensable force in China's higher education system. In Zhejiang province, more than 40 percent of college students are studying in private universities," Li said.

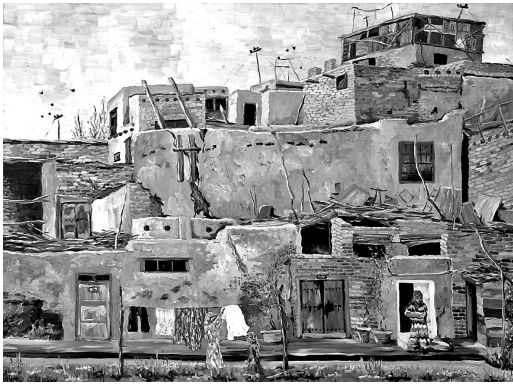
"In China, systems and policies lag behind reform practices. Independent academies, in this regard, face considerably difficulties and confusion resulting from blurred policy and misdirected regulation."

Another key lesson from the Republican Era is the importance of school sovereignty.

In 2009, the central government cancelled the 5 percent ceiling for universities in recruiting students independently. Universities are enjoying more freedom in this regard.

According to an editorial on *China Education Daily*, the Ministry of Education has been formulating measures to reduce interventions on universities' administrative matters since April.

Both measures are evidence that the government is becoming aware of the need for university autonomy and is taking steps to make it happen. ■



Xinjiang Seen Through American Eyes

BY YANG XIN

The Beijing American Center is hosting "A Portrait of Xinjiang," an exhibition and lecture by American painter Joy Bostwick.

Born in Flagstaff, Arizona, the 35-year-old Bostwick graduated Summa Cum Laude from Northern Arizona University in 2003 with a bachelor's degree in Liberal Arts and a certificate in printmaking.

Joy has a passion for painting local minority cultures. She began by painting peoples and places from Mexico and Latin America where her early work and style took shape. She has been painting scenes from Asia for the last several years.

"After reading a few *National Geographic* articles about Xinjiang in college, it was a place I dreamed of going. Being from a small mountain town in the western US, I am much more comfortable being surrounded by empty space, nature and undeveloped land than I am with the city," she said.

"I liked the sound of Xinjiang – remote and beautiful, with contrasting

deserts and mountains. Its rich history was interesting to me, and I was drawn to the diverse mix of cultures."

At the artist lecture, Bostwick will discuss the inspiration for her art. "As an artist, painting is the natural outlet for expressing the beauty I find in different places," she said.

"I love the traditional architecture, the brightly painted doors, local textiles and donkey carts stacked high with produce. On my most recent trip to Kashgar in April, I took more than 700 pictures to use in my paintings," she said. "I am especially excited about the images I captured at the livestock bazaar, part of the Kashgar Sunday Bazaar, a market that has been happening every Sunday since the first century AD. This is one of the places I read about in *National Geographic* and dreamed of visiting, and I have now fulfilled that dream."

Bostwick is currently living and working in a remote corner of Asia, home to many ethnic groups. Many of these peoples still live a very tradi-

tional lifestyle in spite of the modernization around them.

In March 2014, she participated in her first international exhibition, which was held in honor of International Women's Day and included works from nine other female artists. Her Xinjiang works were on display in Urumqi through mid-October.

When asked about her interactions with the Uyghur people, Bostwick replied, "I think that the Uyghur people really felt that my paintings represented their culture in a positive way, and they related to the images on a deeply personal level. This is truly one of the highest compliments I could receive on this series of paintings."

A Portrait of Xinjiang will be presented at the Beijing American Center through March 17, 2015. ■

Beijing American Center

📅 December 5, 2014-March 17, 2015

📍 Jingguang Center, Suite 2801, Hujialou, Chaoyang

💎 Free



Joy Bostwick

Photos by Joy Bostwick

German Christmas Charity Bazaar Opens for Holiday

BY YANG XIN

For many German expats, the annual German Charity Christmas Bazaar is one of the most heartwarming highlights of each year no matter how long they have been living in Beijing.

Even as intense smog continues to blot out the capital's sky, many people have been scrambling to prepare for the German Christmas Charity Bazaar at the German Embassy on November 29. As the years roll on, more Chinese faces have been found outside the German Embassy in the 100-meter-long lines that last half a day.

Organized by the Christmas Charity Bazaar Beijing, a group of volunteers who work together with companies and private donors, the event aims to bring

pieces of German tradition and Christmas spirit to Beijing while raising money for local charitable projects. This year, proceeds will be distributed to eight charitable organizations.

The bazaar is never short of German holiday treats, refreshments and hand-made crafts.

"We like German culture and the food is wonderful!" said a Chinese visitor while lining up for a cup of mulled wine. A whole pig was roast on a spit for the day. Many visitors complimented the pork sandwiches.

2014 marks the 20th year of the Christmas Charitable Bazaar in Beijing.

"You can experience the most authen-



Photo by the German Embassy in Beijing

tic German Christmas Bazaar here," said Michael Clauss, the German ambassador. "We have German sausage and hot wine. Although there is no snow, the thick haze can be considered a substitute," Clauss said.

The embassy estimated that more than 5,000 people participated in this year's bazaar.

German Christmas Markets have a tradition stretching back 400 years. They usually open on the Friday before the first

Advent and close one or two days before Christmas Eve. The original purpose of the markets was to help people stock up for the long winter and to add a bit of light to the dark months.

The German Christmas Charity Bazaar began as a small party for German families in the city. It has since grown to become a carnival event supported by nearly 200 German enterprises and institutions and visited by more than 4,000 residents each year. ■

Mayan Culture Helps Expand Sino-Mexican Ties

BY YANG XIN

Chinese President Xi Jinping and Mexican President Enrique Pena Nieto unveiled Maya – The Language of Beauty, an exhibition depicting the Mayan civilization, on November 13 at the National Museum.

The exhibition of 238 cultural relics from more than 20 Mexican museums is co-hosted by the National Museum of China and the State History Museum of Mexico.



Photos by the Mexican Embassy in Beijing



The Maya exhibition is the first time the National Museum of China has featured Mexican cultural relics. It is part of a series of Sino-Mexican cultural events organized for Mexican President Enrique Pena Nieto's state visit in November.

The exhibition is divided into four sections: the Body as a Canvas, the Clothed Body, the Animal Alter Ego and the Bodies of the Divine.

The first section focuses on the Mayans' views about physical beauty. Their ideals of beauty led to many practices such as facial scratching, dental cosmetology, hairdressing and body painting.

The second section depicts costumes and decorations of Mayans from differing social strata and features loincloths, plumes and jewelry.

The third section focuses on the Mayan people's respect for nature and their relationship with animals. They admired leopards, birds, white-nosed coati and monkeys. The animals were closely related to Mayan's daily lives and were regarded as bonds through which humans could seek god's will.

The fourth section displays stone figures and effigies of Mayan rulers and gods. Gods portrayed by the Mayan not only have human

characteristics but also images of animals, plants and some purely imaginary objects.

As the greatest civilization to arise from the jungles, the Mayans represent an indispensable achievement in global development. Their art records the evolution of Mayan civilization and aesthetics.

"Both Mexico and China have time-honored cultural traditions and civilizations. By hosting such a cultural exhibition, our two peoples can appreciate broader civilizations without the limit of time or space," Xi said at the opening ceremony.

"Mayan civilization is the only known fully developed system of the pre-Columbian Americas that left such precious cultural relics," Pena Nieto said. He said the exhibition would be a new bridge for cultural exchange.

Among the exhibits is one called "plastron" which has attracted many young viewers. It bears a striking resemblance to a character from the popular game series Angry Birds. ■

National Museum of China

⌚ Through March 8, 2015

📍 16 East Chang'an Avenue, Dongcheng

💎 30 yuan

Culture Weekend Opens Sino-Czech Art Dialogue

BY YANG XIN

The Embassy of the Czech Republic hosted several lectures and exhibitions for its Culture Weekend on November 29 and 30. The event began with a talk on "eroticism and emptiness" where four artists shared their work to promote a cultural dialogue.

Czech photographers Jan Saudek and Vladimir Zidlicky shared their pieces that used the female form as a source of inspiration. Chinese artist Man Kaihui showed his graphic art with a Buddhist theme. But the most stunning display was as a collection of jade sculptures by Wu Desheng. Wu exhibited his 22-kilogram jadeite sculpture of the Eight Immortals Crossing the Sea for the first time.

"Art dialogues should never be restricted by national boundaries. Any exotic art form can serve to inspire artists," Wu said. He urges Chinese artists to look on exotic arts with an open mind.

"In Buddhist thought, emptiness is the essence of all that exists. Emptiness is a necessary precondition for the formation of ideas," said Libor Secka, ambassador of the Czech Republic, discussing the theme. "Perhaps not all of the works on

display adhere to these ideas, but conceptions of eroticism and emptiness have been imprinted in the artworks, regardless of whether the works originated in the Western or Eastern civilization."

The Ambassador also referred to the two Czech photographers' works. "For Jan Saudek and Vladimir Zidlicky, the female body is an endless source of inspiration. While Saudek usually emphasizes form and setting, rejecting convention and stereotypes, Zidlicky captures the dynamics of detail and the fleetingness of the moment," he said.

"The aim of this exhibition is to mix the energy emanating from the individual works into an atmosphere of mutual understanding. I hope that everyone who comes to immerse themselves in the ambience of this exhibition hall can overcome the sea of their daily worries and draw closer to their hopes," Secka said.

The two-day Czech culture weekend ends with another interesting exhibition by the Czech-Argentinean artist Federico Diaz at the Art Museum of China Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA) on Sunday.

Federico is not only an artist, but also a visionary inventor. Since the 1990s he has used new media to reveal immaterial



Jan Saudek



The Flame



Wu Deyong



Dance on the Drum

Photos by Embassy of the Czech Republic

aspects of everyday reality that elude the senses. He is displaying his new project called The Welded Ornament of the Times, which reveals human activity through art. ■

CAFA Art Museum

⌚ Through January 4, 2015

📍 8 Huajiadi Nan Jie, Chaoyang

💎 30 yuan

BYCI, a Campsite Offers Youth Chance to Experience Nature

Beijing Youth Camp International (BYCI) has been the darling of city and central government officials since it opened in July 2013.

At the annual National Youth Development meeting this year, the manager of Beijing Youth Education Media (BYEM) gave Vice President Li Yuanchao an account of the city's youth development and the BYCI project.

Li praised BYCI and encouraged the Communist League Committee of Beijing (CLCB), the municipal government and BYEM to further the camp's construction and development.

BYCI is currently expanding with more campsites throughout the city. It plans to develop three to five new sites in the coming years. The main camp location has already received foreign guests from all around the world.

This year, as many as 20 international organizations and a group of officials from embassies and consulates took part in activities held in BYCI. Among them were the Delegation of the EU to China, the Cuban Embassy, the Italian Embassy and the Argentine Embassy.

Jesper Jansen, an education promoter of the EU Delegation, suggested adding more English translations for the guide boards and loudspeakers to play music during hiking trips.

Giulia Barbieri, the group's project coordinator, suggested hosting more charitable activities. "For example, BYCI could invite dog owners to have a trip there and exchange experiences about having a dog. Activities like that must be relaxing and interesting."

About BYCI

Initiated by the Communist League Committee of Beijing, BYCI caters to young people seeking to experience



nature and develop their social responsibility and health. The camp provides comprehensive outdoor training programs for young people from around the world.

Chang Yu, secretary of the Communist League Committee of Beijing, is the camp's chairman. Guo Weijie, deputy secretary of the committee, is its executive chairman.

BYCI is owned in joint by Beijing Education Media, Green Gloves Outdoor Sports, Aijia Investment Holding, Huawei Meilin Investment Holding and Beijing Wumingju Food. The five companies established Beijing Sunshine Outdoor Sports to operate the camp.

Under the supervision of the Municipal Communist

League Committee and with the support of the Miyun District government and Gelaoyu Village, BYCI broke ground in early April 2013. It is expected to become a world-class campsite within three years and an ideal spot to teach youth the values of charity, teamwork and communication.

Beijing Education Media, along with the committee's Social Affairs Department, is responsible for the construction, planning and management of the camp.

The main office is at the Beijing Youth Daily building. Beijing Education Media has a team of 30 staff who maintain and oversee the daily operations of the camp. ■

Hurun Research Unveils its 2014 Report of Luxury Car Brands in China

The Hurun Research Institute released a new 37-page report on the ownership of luxury cars in China on November 26.

The report compares images of eight luxury car brands including Audi, BMW, Mercedes Benz, Lexus, Volvo, Land Rover, Cadillac and Infiniti.

According to the findings, most luxury car owners in China are young, highly educated and wealthy. The average age of the car owner is 33.5 years old; 76 percent are males and some 10 percent spend at least three years abroad. Most have an annual family income of 1.05 million yuan (\$175,000).

"The objective of this report is to highlight the brand image of these luxury cars in China," said Rupert Hoogewerf, chairman and chief researcher of Hurun Report.

The report finds the average monthly income of the luxury car owners was 30,000 yuan with their household income reaching 88,000 yuan. At least 30 percent of the households had a monthly income of 100,000 yuan a month or more. The average personal wealth of the households was 8.8 million yuan, and 10 percent had



more than 10 million yuan.

The owners with different car brands have distinctive features according to the report.

Mercedes Benz owners were mostly successful entrepreneurs. BMW owners considered themselves to be small and medium business owners or senior managers of multinationals with a positive attitude to life. Land Rover owners were considered to be the nouveau riche or rich heirs, although they considered themselves to be professionals, senior managers in multinationals and self-made millionaires.

Volvo owners were considered to be valuable members

of society, behaving in a morally upstanding manner.

Audi owners were considered to be government officials or mature and experienced people: they self-identified as white-collar workers with a positive attitude to life.

Cadillac owners had the image of being successful white-collar workers: they self-identified as senior managers of multinationals.

Infiniti owners were considered to be rich heirs, film stars and upper-level office workers.

Lexus owners considered themselves to be white-collar workers, professionals and senior managers of state-owned enterprises.

The report analyzes stylishness and brand awareness were considered the three most important characteristics of a luxury car brand. After that came technology and brand culture.

Safety was most important for 80 percent of luxury car owners, followed by comfort and brand. Men considered price, fuel consumption and power most important, while women considered outward appearance and the feeling of luxury most important. ■



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